

2008 Session Report to the 34th District

April, 2008

State Representative Sharon Nelson

Representative **Sharon Nelson**

Committee assignments:

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government & Audit Review
- Local Government

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

My first session came to a close, and I am glad to be back home and have time to talk to you about the session and its accomplishments, as well as what additional work must be done.

In my first newsletter I included a survey and hundreds of you responded, providing me with information about your priorities, concerns, and issues on which you need assistance.

I have been reading your responses and will continue to read each and every survey that is returned—your opinion is important to me!

The surveys clearly indicate that the majority of you want to pay our teachers better, reduce class sizes, and provide better tutoring programs, including additional assistance with English as a second language.

Your concerns about transportation—improving transit and relieving congestion as we increase density in our cities—were also evident in the responses I received. The Legislature made progress regarding the 520 bridge, but only took “first steps” on repairing the viaduct. Bus rapid transit will provide some relief on the West Seattle Bridge, but we need more options to relieve congestion and I recognize that.

For the North Highline community, the issue of annexation remains a key component for planning for the future. I worked with Burien and Seattle this session to try to find resolution, however, there is more to do. I want to continue to hear from the residents of North Highline regarding their needs.

Regarding the environment, I am very disappointed that, even with a large majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives, we failed to protect the valuable shorelines of Maury Island. I worked with Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown to obtain a study that will determine whether Glacier Northwest even owns the materials on Maury Island. We expect the results by next session.

I want to thank all of you who contacted my office by phone, email and regular mail with your concerns or even suggestions and ideas. Please continue to do so. Remember that even though the legislative session is over, I am your representative year 'round.

Best regards,



Rep. Sharon Nelson is congratulated by her colleagues on the passage of her first bill.

Representative Sharon Nelson

A fair and balanced budget that enhances education

The state's economy is beginning to feel the bumps of what everyone is predicting will be a national recession. Luckily for Washingtonians, our state is experiencing less turmoil than other parts of the country. However, in March, state revenues collections were projected to be \$423 million less than previously expected. This reduction has impacted the amount of reserves that will be available next year. But even with the reduced revenues, the Legislature was able to save \$850 million in total reserves.

These reserves remained after we increased teachers' salaries, provided more funding for non-certified staff in our schools, and obtained funding to begin to improve our community college system through converting part time faculty to full time. We also increased funding for early childhood education and full time kindergarten, to make sure our children are ready for school.



As a part of that effort, the 2008 State Supplemental Budget included \$2 million for the Greenbridge Early Learning Center in White Center. The Greenbridge project is part of an extraordinary public/private partnership that will reap remarkable benefits for our kids.

The Seahurst Environmental Science Center also received \$300,000 in the supplemental budget. This program, which is run primarily by volunteers, focuses on math and science, using the near-shore environment as a catalyst for learning.

I am very pleased with this funding and our work on education this session.

Beach Management Districts

Have you ever been at Fauntleroy Cove in the summer and, if so, does the stench of rotting sea lettuce come to mind? Sea lettuce can grow uncontrollably and as it dies it kills sea life, makes the beaches unusable, and causes human health problems. The stench is a public health and safety issue for those who visit or live near the beach.



Sea lettuce in Fauntleroy Cove.

Photo credit: Judy Pickens

I was pleased that my bill (HB 3186) to form beach management districts passed the legislature. We also managed to secure \$294,000 in the Operating Budget which was passed by the Legislature to finally deal with this public health problem that affects many people in Fauntleroy Cove and also in Federal Way at Dumas Bay. Regretfully, Governor Gregoire vetoed this funding—which would have ensured that this public health and safety program would have been underway this summer.

This bill still provides the city and county with a tool to address the clean-up of the beaches. Additionally, I will continue to work to obtain state funding in the future to support this effort.

My goal is that this will become a model program to help our community and other communities in Puget Sound.

Be sure to visit my website at www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/nelson/ where you'll find information on issues that matter to our community.



34th District

How do we fix a problem like the Ferry System?

I live on Vashon and like many of you, I am frustrated by the crisis our ferry system is going through. This session we worked on real solutions:



For starters, we're addressing the imminent vessel shortage by appropriating \$368 million for 6 new vessels, both small and

large. The 144-car vessels will be delivered in 2010 and 2011. We also managed to keep fares frozen at least through September, 2009.

We need our system to be safe, affordable, and reliable, but keep in mind that ours is the nation's largest ferry system, so we're facing a long-term challenge. This session we developed a five-point reform plan to restore confidence in the ferry system:

1. **Control Costs** - The final ferry budget approved by the legislature cut unnecessary overhead and kept costs under control.
2. **Overhaul Management** - We are sending a clear message that ferry management is to focus on service and safety.
3. **Focus on Service and Safety** - The ferries are the state highway system for dozens of Washington communities. Funding is tight and resources should be focused on providing safe and reliable service, rather than expanding terminals and other extras.
4. **Build for the future** - We are putting the pieces in place so future budgets can reflect long-term vessel replacement and terminal preservation priorities, rather than continually react to emergencies.
5. **Accountability** - Strict accountability and oversight measures are now in place to make sure the ferry

system is focused on service, cost control, state-of-the art management and orderly planning for the future.



Burien – Working Toward the Future

The City of Burien is working to redevelop its Northeast Redevelopment Area and requested funding to move the Highline West Seattle Mental Health Center from this area. The state budget includes \$1.5 million to assist the city with that move.

The State is also providing Burien \$500,000 to begin preconstruction activities in the northeast area and \$250,000 for housing related purposes. This will assist the City in producing a master plan for an area that has been impacted by the third runway, and where new airport-compatible uses are being explored.

The redevelopment of downtown Burien has been remarkable and the State Legislature worked closely with the city to assist them toward continuing to meet the goals and objectives of the city, and their desire to develop the northeast redevelopment area.

North Highline Annexation

The North Highline area's future remains a question. This diverse and vibrant community is an "unincorporated island," which is adjacent to Burien, Seattle, SeaTac, and Tukwila. Under the Growth Management Act the area cannot remain unincorporated indefinitely. So both Seattle and Burien have declared North Highline a potential annexation area, indicating their interest in having this area become a part of their cities.

However, after a bill failed to provide funding to both cities for annexation, the City of Seattle notified me and the other legislators representing the 34th District that they have numerous concerns about the annexation process.

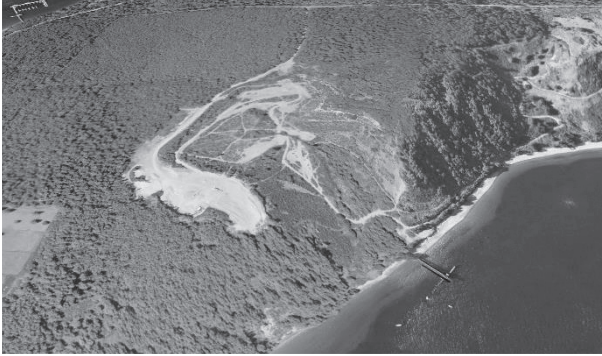
It is my goal to meet with the residents of North Highline in the upcoming months to hear what you would like to see on the ballot as options for future governance.

The cities have been clear about their objectives and I have heard from many citizens regarding concerns about annexation to one city or another. When this issue goes to the ballot, I want to ensure the interests of the citizens of North Highline are clearly represented by the proposals upon which they have to vote.

Representative Sharon Nelson

Protecting Maury Island

We passed several bills this session to ensure that marine protected areas and aquatic reserves are preserved in order to enhance the Puget Sound Partnership. However, when the shoreline of Maury Island was discussed, its significance to the Partnership was discounted by approximately a third of the Democrats in the House of Representatives.



Aerial photograph of mine site in Maury Island.

The State of Washington is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to restore or preserve nearshore habitat. Maury Island is so important to that effort, that it was declared the first aquatic reserve by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Yet that agency and the House of Representatives have been willing to allow an industrial barge loading facility to be constructed and operated in this sensitive environment, rather than protect the aquatic reserve.

Another issue arose around Maury Island this year regarding whether the State of Washington owns the sand and gravel on a key portion of the site. Under the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown a study of this issue was included in the 2008 supplemental

budget notes. It appears that the State may own the sand and gravel not only on this site but on 63 other sites. If that is the case, then there could be tens of millions of dollars due to the state school trust fund.

This study should be completed in December 2008 and could be very significant for the State of Washington and our efforts to fund education in this State.

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